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HONG KONG



THEY  
HATE US.



NO MATTER  
WHAT WE DO, NO  
MATTER HOW WE  
TRY, THEY STILL  
HATE US.

JUST  
BECAUSE WE'RE  
KRYPTONIANS.



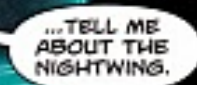
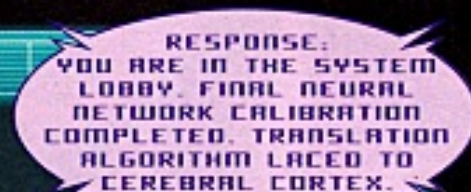
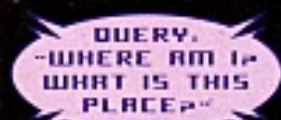














TO TELL  
THE NIGHTWING'S STORY  
IS TO TELL THE STORY OF  
THREE, THE FLAMEBIRD, THE  
BUILDER, AND THE NIGHTWING.  
AS WITH KRYPTON ITSELF,  
THEIR STORY BEGINS  
IN FIRE.



# DIVINE SPARK

PART 4

FROM THE MISTS OF  
LOST KRYPTON, STORIES  
ARE TOLD OF TWO MYTHICAL  
HEROES WHO TIME AND TIME  
AGAIN ROSE TO PROTECT  
THEIR PEOPLE FROM  
TYRANNY AND  
TERROR.

NIGHTWING  
AND  
FLAMEBIRD

GREG RUCKA & ERIC TRAUTMANN: Writers - PERE PÉREZ: Artist  
FERNANDO DAGNINO & RAÚL FERNÁNDEZ: Book of Rao Artists  
JAVIER MENA: Colorist - ROB LEIGH: Letterer - CAFU with SANTIAGO ARCAS: Cover  
WIL MOSS: Asst. Editor - MATT IDELSON: Editor

Once, the infinite was burning chaos. Devoid of form, devoid of order, devoid of intellect, filled only with the insatiable hunger of endless conflagration.

Amid this chaos, an awareness stirred.

It surveyed the disorder and grew displeased at such waste, waste on an infinite scale.

"No more," it thought, and by that simple act created a new paradigm in the heavens. Thus was born force of will, the very concepts of order, of nature, of action and reaction.

And as it grew stronger, it chose for itself a name, and by doing so created the concept of names, the first time an individual will imposed order upon chaos.

And the first voice ever spoken declared its name:

**SUPERMAN**  
created by  
Jerry Siegel  
and Joe Shuster



I am Rao.

THIS...  
IS RAO?

THIS IS  
AN IDEALIZED  
REPRESENTATION OF  
RAO (MAY HIS NAME BE  
UNIVERSALLY HONORED),  
EXTRACTED FROM  
KRYPTONIAN RELIGIOUS  
GUILD ARCHIVES.

And with these words, no longer did flame devour the heavens. Rao-The-Newly-Born imposed structure on the chaos, and took its vast power into himself.


And Rao-The-Newly-Born cast his eyes throughout the pristine barrens of the universe, and saw that it was pure; it was clean; it was ordered; and it was empty.

And thus a new concept entered into the void:

Loneliness.

Rao pondered this loneliness, until, reaching into himself for a small fraction of the energies harnessed within...





WHY ARE YOU SHOWING ME THIS? WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH--

THE STORY OF THE NIGHTWING AND THE FLAMEBIRD IS THE STORY OF CREATION.

I THOUGHT... THERE WERE ONLY TWO, NIGHTWING AND FLAMEBIRD.

INCORRECT HYPOTHESIS. KRYPTONIAN RAO-ORTHODOX PANTHEON CONTAINS 14 MAJOR DEITIES, 20 DEMIGODS, 1482 TITANS.


...And transformed the flames of chaos into the fires of creation, and thus were the machineries of the universe created, made manifest by Rao-The-Newly-Born's precision and control.

Stars burned in the void, newborn planets cooled beneath Rao's gaze; until, at last, only one task remained. For these worlds, without a proper guiding hand, would remain as empty as the void itself.

Then Rao turned his eye to a newly formed jewel in his heavens. This would be the birthplace of his greatest creation. And he gave it a name, and called it Krypton.

Thus did he become Rao-The-First-Kryptonian, and he smiled anew, and released many fragments of his infinite power, and each was alive with his designs, and each was an instrument of his divine will.

And so he became Rao-The-Father, and among his favored children -- and there were many, though their tales are for other days -- was The Flamebird.



THEY ARE NOT RELEVANT TO YOUR INITIAL QUERY. STORING DISCUSSION TRACK FOR LATER PLAYBACK.

WOW.

SHE'S... BEAUTIFUL.





The Flamebird, made of chaos fire, released to perform a singular duty: necessary renewal and rebirth. To clear away that which is harmful or fallow, that something greater may grow in its place.

And so that the chaos fire within her would not burn rampant or uncontrolled, Rao-The-Father designed for The Flamebird a directing force: love.

The Flamebird's love is fierce, and among those she loved most was another of Rao-The-Father's children, and his name is Vohc, called The Builder.

Vohc-The-Builder, whose hands are guided by endless curiosity and boundless desire to create, to craft, to improve upon that which he has built before, and to inscribe Rao-The-Father's signature upon the material world. Vohc-The-Builder, the maker of things in the twilight, in the space between day and night.

Vohc-The-Builder, inspired to ever-greater feats of creation by his own love for The Flamebird.







THAT  
JUNGLE...SHE'S  
DESTROYING  
IT?

PERIODIC  
CULLING OF  
ECOSYSTEM  
IS NECESSARY,  
TO PREVENT  
STAGNATION

THIS IS THE  
FLAMEBIRD'S  
RAO-GIVEN  
FUNCTION.

RECONSTRUCTION  
AND IMPROVEMENT:  
THAT IS THE  
RAO-GIVEN FUNCTION  
OF VOHC-THE-  
BUILDER.

I'VE SEEN  
FLAMEBIRD--

--WHO--

--AND NOW  
I'VE SEEN  
VOHC.

SO  
WHERE IS THE  
NIGHTWING?

ACCESSING.

Through the eons, the children of Rao played their game of creation and destruction.

Vohc-The-Builder, compelled by the will of his father, inspired by the love of his sister, faced his task with joy. In devotion, he crafted ever-more delicate and elegant engines of creation: the perfect sunset; the most lush jungle; the hardest beast; the mightiest river.

The Flamebird, compelled by the will of her father, her devotion to her brother, faced her task with joy, and razed Vohc's constructions, inspiring him to ever-greater feats of craft.

Theirs was a divine contest, played in harmony, a precise mechanism that shaped the surface of Rao-The-Father's chosen jewel, Krypton.



THE NIGHTWING.  
IN RAD-ORTHOODOX  
DOCTRINE. LITERALLY--  
"RAD-THE-FATHER'S  
WATCHFUL EYES IN  
THE DARKNESS."

FRIEND  
TO VOHC-THE-  
BUILDER.

--AND SO YOU  
JOIN ME AGAIN,  
MY SHADOWY  
FRIEND?

SUCH IS  
MY FATE AND MY  
DUTY, HE-WHO-  
BUILDS--

--TO STAND  
ALONE IN THE  
DARK. ALL-SEEING,  
NEVER SEEN.

AH, BUT I DO  
SEE YOU, FRIEND  
NIGHTWING. AND  
PERHAPS, IF YOU  
WISH IT--

--I CAN FIND  
A WAY TO CAST  
SOME LIGHT INTO  
YOUR SHADOWS.

THAT  
WOULD BE...  
AGREEABLE.

**R**ao-The-Father created The Nightwing. His Eyes in the Night. Thus the duty was charged from his Father to seek out evil and corruption that hides in the shadows; to pursue and destroy it.

So it is that The Nightwing exists in the darkness, all-seeing in the deep night, hidden to daylight eyes.

Thus The Nightwing's mission was the loneliest of all Rao's children.

But in the border of twilight, where Vohc-The-Builder would toil, The Nightwing could be seen. And thus, together in the dark and near-dark, did The Nightwing and Vohc-The-Builder become friends. And so it was that Vohc saw his brother's loneliness, and understood, and sought to ease it. And he made a bridge between The Nightwing's shadow realm and The Flamebird's daystar glow.

And in that act of kindness were created the seeds of betrayal, hatred, and vengeance.





At the sight of The Flamebird, the loneliness of The Nightwing was eased, and joy filled his heart. And The Flamebird, rapt by the stillness and silence of The Nightwing, returned his love in kind. And thus in twilight they would meet, and be happy.

As the twilight faded into deepest night, Vohc-The-Builder spoke to The Nightwing. From primordial darkness, The Nightwing thanked his brother, the engineer of his happiness, who had eased the loneliness of his vigils.

And Vohc-The-Builder beheld the love between his kin, and was inspired once more. This was a new inspiration, as bottomless and hungry as the fires of chaos yoked within him.

Troubled, Vohc-The-Builder searched Krypton for the precise location upon which to give form to his inspiration, to the crowning achievement of his existence, his purpose. It would be the ultimate expression of his love for The Flamebird, who had given her heart to another.





WHAT IS THIS  
NEW CREATION,  
BROTHER?

THIS IS MY  
MASTERPIECE, A  
TRIBUTE TO THE  
FLAMEBIRD.

IT IS MY  
HEART.

BE CAUTIOUS,  
MY FRIEND. SHE IS  
FIRE, AND FIRE CAN  
BURN AS WELL AS  
WARM.

DEAR KINSMAN,  
HAVE NO FEAR.  
WE DO AS WE  
MUST.

NO!  
WAIT!

STOP!

THIS WILL  
ALL LEAD TO  
SOMETHING  
GREATER.

Vohc-The-Builder began his masterpiece, an expression of the pure, unselfish love he held for his muse. All that Vohc loved about The Flamebird he made manifest in the creature he fashioned. A fitting monument, he declared, one worthy of his love.

And seeing his tribute, The Flamebird praised her brother's work, and marveled at the creature. And she raised her hands to rain down fire, as her duty and nature both commanded.

For the first time, Vohc-The-Builder pleaded for what he had made. He implored her to look close, to see the truth in his craft, that she would know the depth and strength of his love.

"And this is the expression of my love," spoke The Flamebird. "From this renewal, you shall create that which is greater."

...OH, NO.

--BEG YOU,  
PLEASE, IF YOU  
HAVE ANY LOVE  
IN YOUR HEART  
FOR ME--

Thus Vohc-The-Builder saw his offering burnt to ash before him, and with it his love for The Flamebird. And the void in its place was filled with something new to Rao-The-Father's creation: Boundless sorrow, and the seeds of madness.





GLORIOUS, MY BROTHER!  
DO YOU SEE NOW? THIS IS  
TRULY YOUR GREATEST  
WORK.

UNTIL YOUR  
NEXT.

YES,  
I SEE.

MUST  
THIS ALSO BE  
DESTROYED?



TEMPERED,  
HE-WHO-BUILDS.  
IMPROVED, AS  
RAO-OUR-FATHER  
WILLS.

VERY  
WELL.

WE ALL  
DO WHAT WE  
MUST.



SOMETHING'S  
NOT RIGHT...

CORRECT.



THIS IS THE  
HERESY OF THE  
BREAKER.

NNYAAAA!

NIGHTWING!



In deepening madness, there grew a cold certainty. The Flamebird had destroyed that which Vohc-The-Builder loved, and in so doing, had poisoned his love for her. And what did The Flamebird love?

To punish The Flamebird, so too must he hurt The Nightwing.

He set his hand to a new creation, a magnificent spire of purest crystal, in which he planted vast reserves of power. And when the spire was completed, Vohc-The-Builder faced the judgment of The Flamebird.

"It is magnificent," she cried. "What is its function?"

"All will be clear," was Vohc-The-Builder's only response.

And so, heart singing with joy, The Flamebird struck out with divine fire.

Then the fabric of nature tore and howled in agony, and through that tear was created a new space of phantoms and emptiness. Vohc-The-Builder's monument to the void that Rao-The-Father so abhorred.

As the spire shattered, one fragment pierced the shadows, imprisoning The Nightwing within an impenetrable nothingspace.



**BELOVED!**

"BELOVED"?

I SHOULD BE YOUR BELOVED, NOT SOME SKULKING WRAITH, A KEEPER OF SECRETS, A BETRAVER OF FRIENDS.

YOU DESTROY ALL THAT I HAVE BUILT IN YOUR HONOR, AND STILL YOU CALL HIM "BELOVED."

RAO-THE-FATHER'S WILL BE DAMNED TO THE VOID.

I SHALL BUILD NO MORE.

RELEASE HIM, VOHC-THE-BREAKER!

RELEASE HIM!

I SHALL BREAK.

The Flamebird screamed in rage and pain. Where once she felt the reassuring presence of The Nightwing, there was now only emptiness.

She beat against the prison with all her chaos might but could not free her love, so elegant were the mechanisms of Vohc-The-Builder.

Now, in his madness, Vohc-The-Builder offered The Flamebird a bargain: Deny her love for The Nightwing, and he would release him; refuse, and they would spend eternity apart.

"I cannot betray my nature, kinsman," The Flamebird pleaded. "Nor my heart."

Then Vohc-The-Builder cursed her, and cursed the will of Rao-The-Father. "If I cannot win your heart with creation," he cried, "I shall earn your fear with destruction!"

And thus Vohc-The-Builder turned away from his Father and freed within himself the fires of chaos Rao-The-Father had yoked there, and made himself anew. He cast aside his tools and fashioned in their place cruel and terrible instruments of devastation.

So it was that Vohc-The-Builder ended and made himself Vohc-The-Breaker, the Betrayer of Kin, the First Heretic, an abomination in the eyes of Rao.

THERE IS NO RELEASE. HE IS BUT A PHANTOM NOW.

YOU SHALL HURT AS I HURT, FOREVER SEPARATED FROM YOUR "BELOVED."

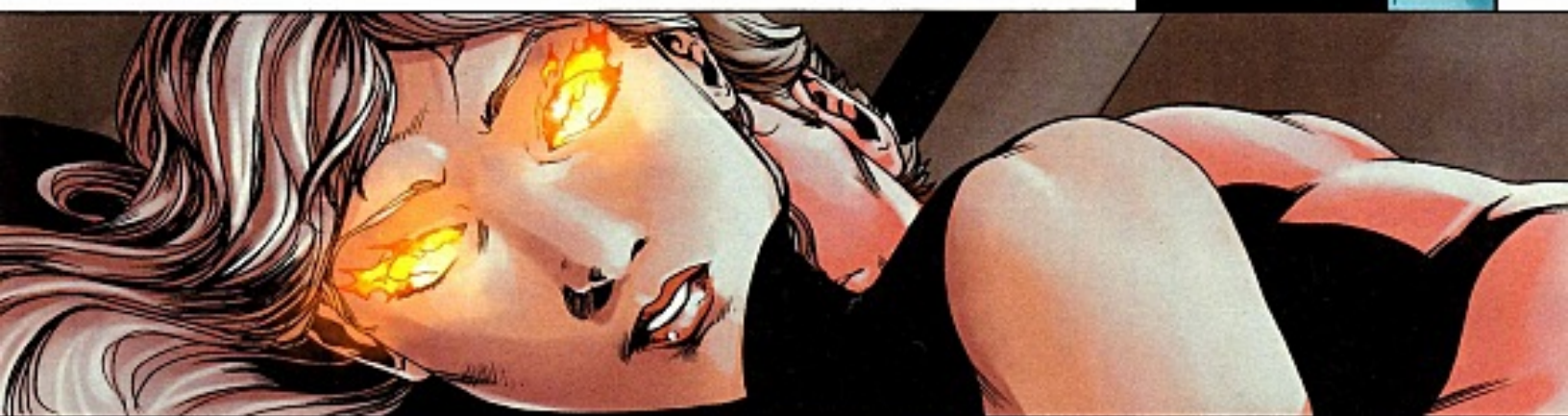
WAAAAA



NEURAL LINK  
TERMINATED.













DHI QAR  
PROVINCE, IRAQ.

I'M NOT  
SURE ABOUT  
THIS, THARA.

SHE SPOKE TO  
ME IN MY DREAMS  
LAST NIGHT. SHE SAID  
WE WERE TO COME  
HERE.

AND AFTER LAST  
NIGHT, I CAN HARDLY  
REFUSE.

I CAN'T  
REALLY ARGUE  
WITH THAT.

WOULD HAVE  
BEEN NICE OF THE  
FLAMEBIRD TO TELL  
YOU WHY.



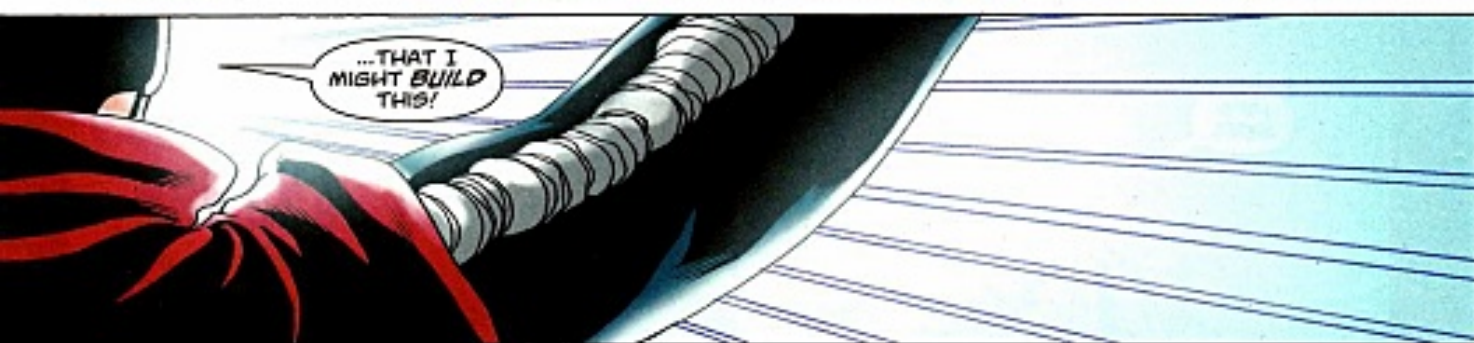




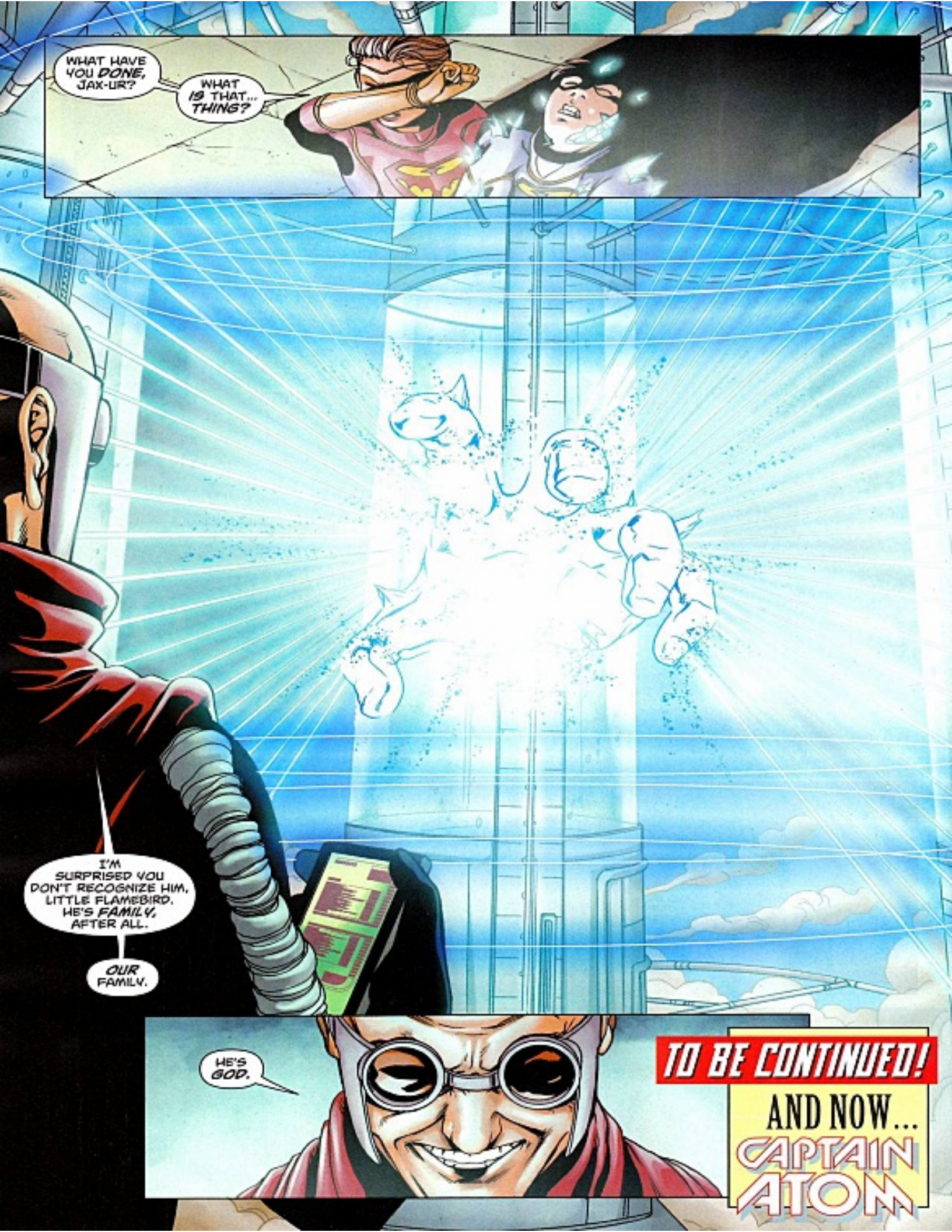












WHAT HAVE  
YOU *DONE*,  
JAX-UR?

WHAT  
IS THAT...  
THING?

I'M  
SURPRISED YOU  
DON'T RECOGNIZE HIM,  
LITTLE FLAMEBIRD.  
HE'S *FAMILY*,  
AFTER ALL.

OUR  
FAMILY.

HE'S  
GOD.

**TO BE CONTINUED!**

AND NOW...  
**CAPTAIN  
ATOM**







...IT'S CALLED  
**SORCERERS'**  
**WORLD!**

IT'S THE **LOCUS**  
FOR ALL THE MAGIC  
HERE ON EARTH AS WELL  
AS **OTHER** ARCAINE  
WORLDS AND  
DIMENSIONS.

AND SO, IN  
TURN, THE LAND OF  
NIGHTSHADES.

THE GREEN.  
THE GREY. THE RED.  
COUNTLESS OTHER  
REALMS AND  
WORLDS.

HELL,  
EVEN **HELL**... THE  
GATES UP TO IT,  
ANYWAY...







IFÉ.

GEMWORLD.

MXVZPTLK'S 5th  
DIMENSION.

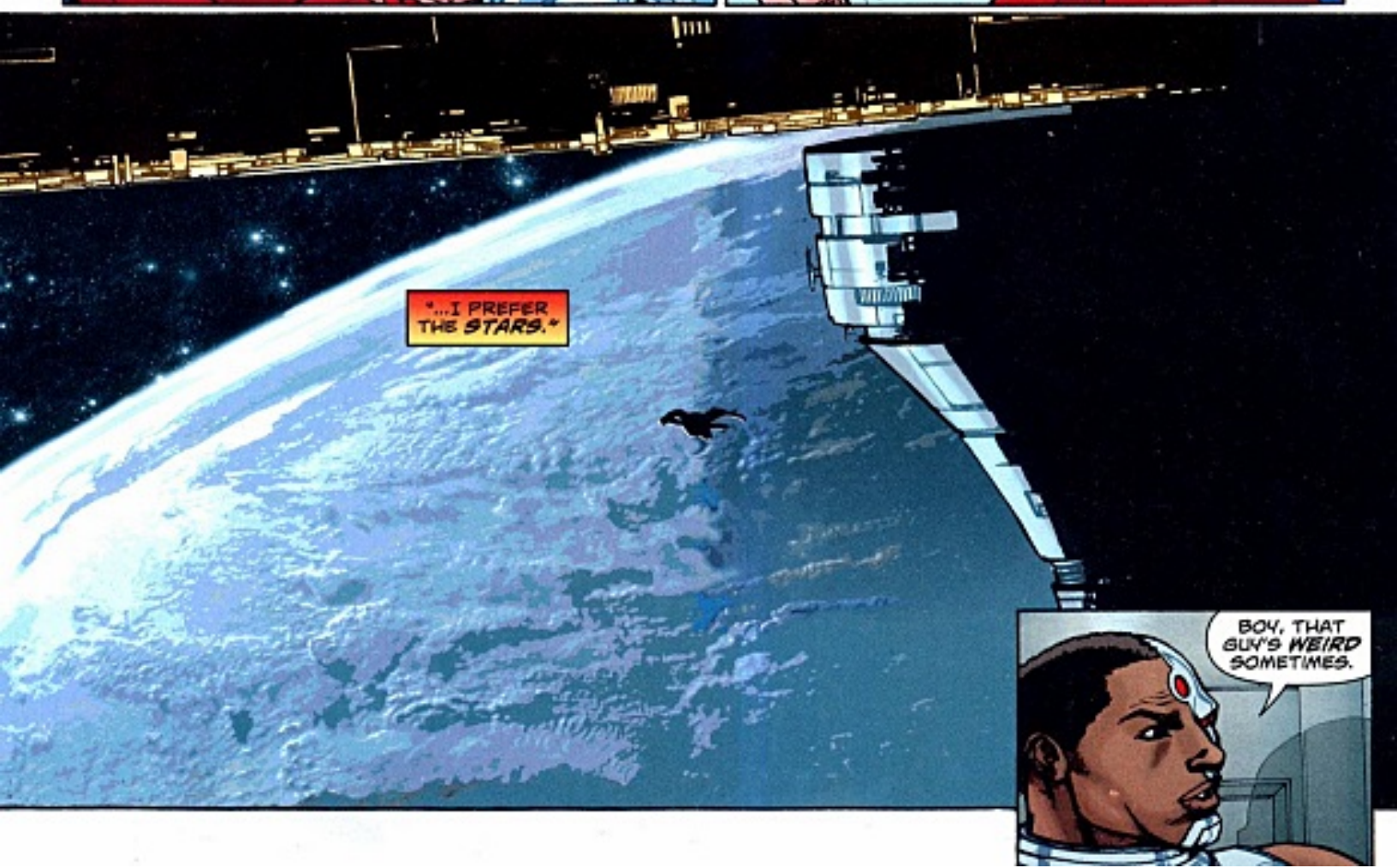
JEJUNE  
REALM.

MYRRA, WHERE  
OUR BUDDY JIM ROKK,  
THE NIGHTMASTER,  
LIVES.

SORCERERS'  
WORLD IS THE HUB  
TO ALL OF IT. THE  
HEART.

CAPTAIN?

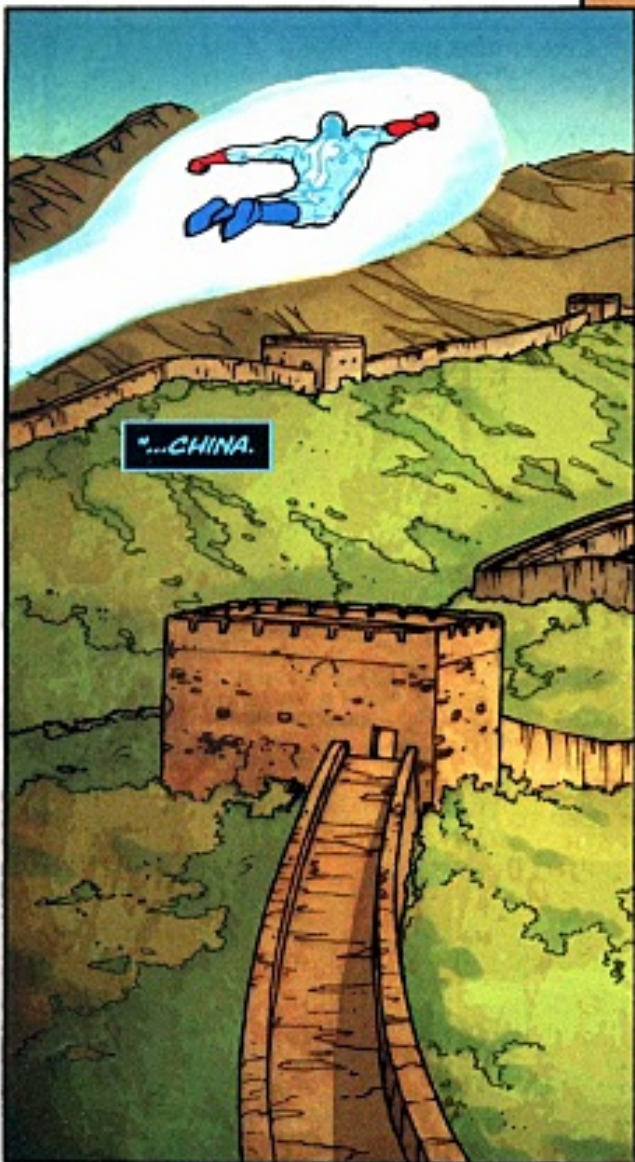












"...CHINA."

"TRY TO AVOID  
ANY OF THE METAS  
THEY GOT."



"...YET HOW BIG  
IT IS WITHIN."





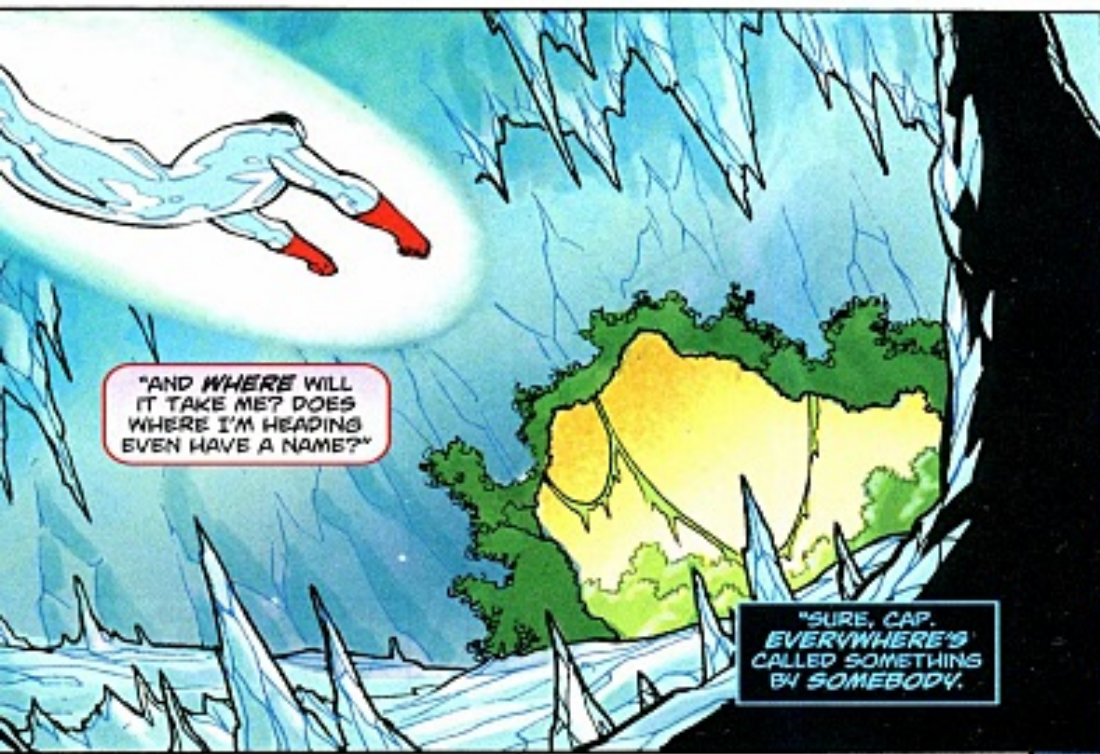


"THOUGH FROM  
WHAT I'VE HEARD,  
THAT'S **HARDER**  
TO DO THAN IT  
USED TO BE.

"ANYWAY, YOU GET  
THROUGH THAT LEG,  
MAKE YOUR WAY TO  
THE **HIMALAYAS**.



"THERE'S ONE CAVERN.  
**CRAZY** HOW HARD IT IS TO  
SEE FROM THE OUTSIDE...



"AND **WHERE** WILL  
IT TAKE ME? DOES  
WHERE I'M HEADING  
EVEN HAVE A NAME?"

"SURE, CAP.  
**EVERYWHERE'S**  
CALLED SOMETHING  
BY **SOMEBODY**.



"IN FACT YOU MIGHT'VE  
HEARD OF THIS PLACE ALREADY.  
FOR **SURE**, MAYBE...



"...IT'S CALLED  
SKARTARIS."



**CAPTAIN  
ATOM**

CHAPTER EIGHT

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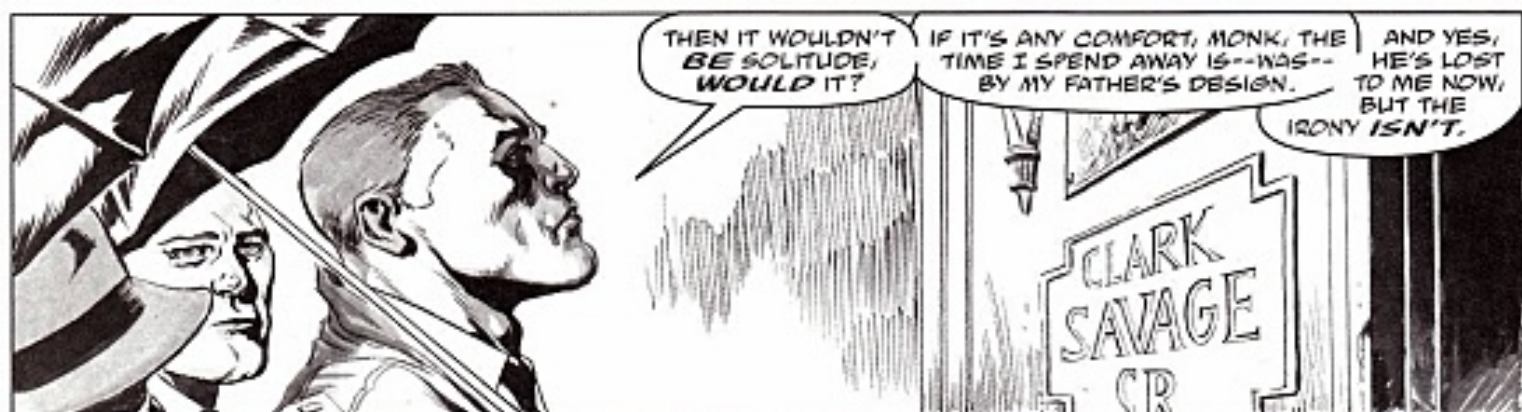
**SPECIAL  
SNEAK  
PREVIEW**

**MARCH 2010**



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SO, HOW DOES THE  
CRIME FIGHTING  
BUSINESS?

I COULD  
ASK YOU  
THE SAME...

'CEPT FOR THE  
FACT YOU'RE  
NOT *IN* IT.

HMMM...  
YOU JUDGE ME  
TOO HARSHLY. I'M A  
CIVIL SERVANT, SWORN  
TO UPHOLD THE  
PEACE...

WHOSE?

OF COURSE  
I'M INTERESTED  
PRIMARILY IN  
MINE.





To: Mike Marts  
From: Ian Sattler

Hey Marts - Thanks for showing me ALL of the covers to the Return of Bruce Wayne. They're even more awesome than you said! I know we haven't let these out to the public yet, so I promise not to show them around. Gotta go write DC Nation now...TTYL

# DC NATION

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